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Kashmir: A Simmering Trouble Spot

An Intelligence Memorandum

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Kashmir: A Simmering Trouble Spot (U)

Summary

The potential for trouble in Kashmir has risen during the past year as a result of heightened political and religious tension in India's portion of the divided state and new strains in Indo-Pakistani relations caused by the crisis in Afghanistan.

As long as Pakistan rejects the finality of the partition of Kashmir, lasting Indo-Pakistani rapprochement is unlikely. In the Pakistani view, Muslim-dominated Kashmir should have become part of Pakistan when Pakistan was carved out of British India as a homeland for India's Muslim minority. India, however, holds two-thirds of Kashmir and is unwilling to alter the status quo. This emotion-laden dispute has caused Indo-Pakistani hostilities in the past and could again lead to fighting.

New Delhi is not complacent about its hold on Kashmir, the only Indian state with a Muslim majority. Last summer Kashmiri fundamentalists called for an Iranian-style revolution aimed at wresting Kashmir from Hindu control in New Delhi. The extremists were arrested, but New Delhi will be wary of any further sign of open political discontent. New Delhi is also sensitive to attitudes among the 70 million Muslims in other parts of India. Violence between Hindus and Muslims is growing, particularly in the heavily populated northern states. New Delhi suspects Pakistan may be behind this unrest, but it lacks evidence.

Both India and Pakistan are nervous about their fragile relationship. India believes Pakistan could undertake military action in the Kashmir border area, particularly if political instability develops in Kashmir. New Delhi is also concerned that Pakistan's military leaders, if they prove unable to sustain a viable government at home, will seek to divert Pakistani attention by creating incidents with India.

Similarly, Islamabad is worried about the implications of India's arms buildup and the recent reaffirmation of New Delhi's close relationship with Moscow despite Indian unhappiness with the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

This memorandum was written by [redacted] Southwest Asia Analytic Center, Near East South Asia Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and the National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia. Research was completed on 31 December 1980. Questions and comments are welcome and should be directed to the Chief, Southwest Asia Analytic Center, NESA Division, OPA, [redacted]

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A miscalculation of intentions or overreaction to minor military activity by either India or Pakistan could trigger serious hostilities in or near Kashmir. Although this does not appear likely in the near term, there is a deep reservoir of distrust and suspicion between India and Pakistan, and the sensitive Kashmir issue could explode with little forewarning. [redacted]

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Kashmir:
A Simmering Trouble Spot

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Background

Kashmir has been a major source of contention between India and Pakistan since 1947 when the British withdrew from the subcontinent. Kashmir was one of the semiautonomous princely states that had to decide whether to join India or the new Islamic state of Pakistan by independence day, 15 August 1947. In most cases, Hindu states acceded to India and Muslim ones to Pakistan. Kashmir's situation was unusual in that it was a Muslim majority state ruled by a hereditary Hindu monarchy in an area contiguous to Pakistan.

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The Hindu maharaja of Kashmir was reluctant to join either Pakistan or democratic-minded India, where hereditary rule had no future. On independence day he was still looking for some form of autonomy or independence. This procrastination heightened discontent among his Kashmiri subjects who wanted relief from the oppressive rule of the Hindu family that Britain had imposed on them in the 19th century. By late October, internal disorders made the maharaja's position untenable. When Pakistani infiltrators tried to take the Vale of Kashmir by force, he appealed to India for military help and acceded to the Indian Union. Pro-Pakistani rebels set up an Azad (Free) Kashmir Government near the Pakistan border. Pakistani troops eventually crossed into Azad Kashmir—which became Pakistan's portion of Kashmir—and helped hold the line against Indian forces.

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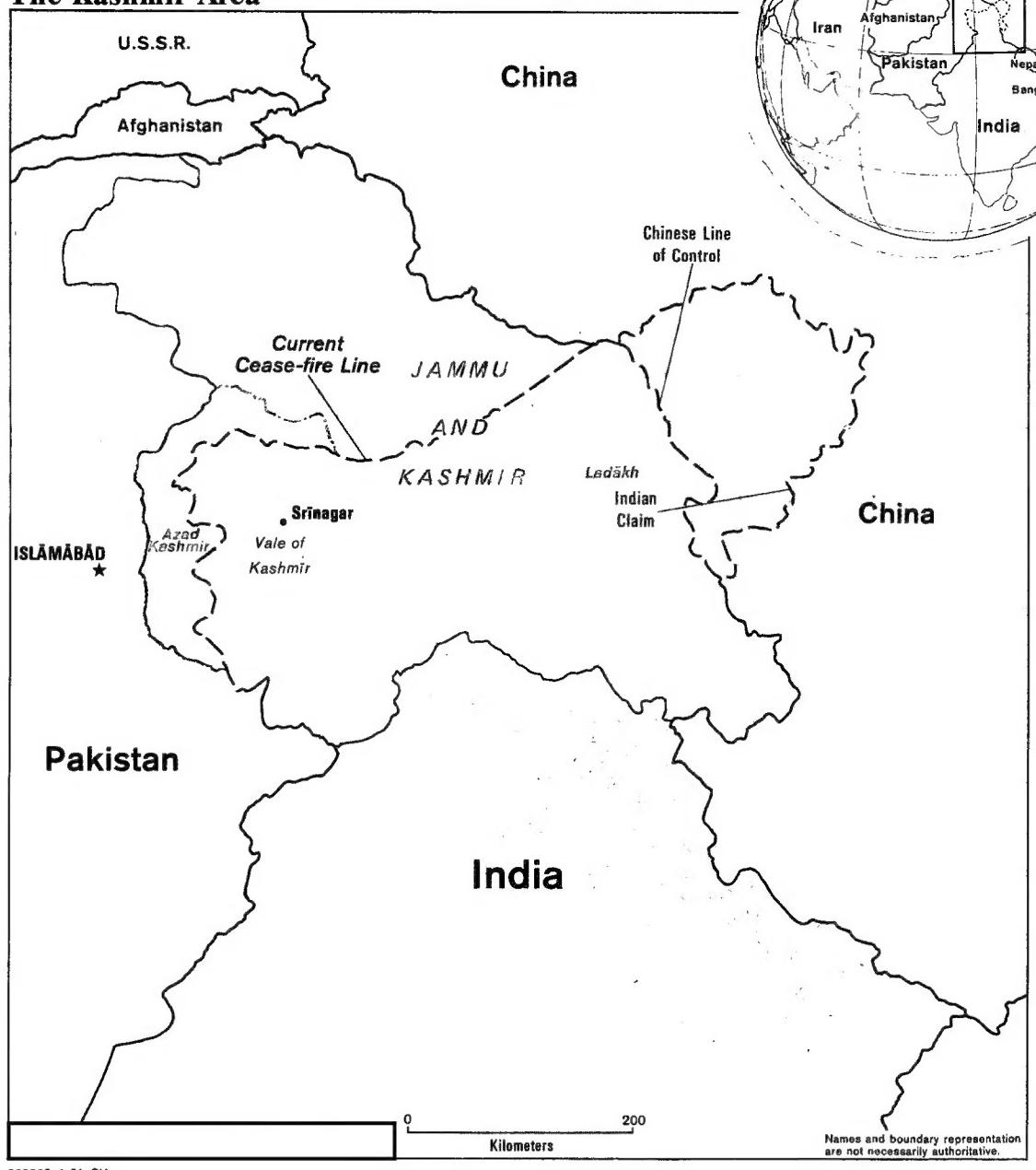
When the maharaja threw in his lot with India, Prime Minister Nehru claimed the accession was provisional, pending a plebiscite to ascertain whether the Kashmir people preferred joining India or Pakistan. A plebiscite was never held. While both India and Pakistan accepted self-determination as the means of resolving the issue, neither would withdraw its personnel from Kashmir prior to a plebiscite. Intermittent fighting between Indian and Pakistani Army units ensued in various parts of Kashmir, and the two governments brought their complaints to the United Nations

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Numerous UN efforts to solve the Kashmir dispute failed. In 1949, however, a cease-fire line was established along the stabilized military front with the assistance of the newly created United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan. The 800-kilometer cease-fire line—mostly along rugged, mountainous terrain—established India's control over two-thirds of Kashmir, including the coveted Vale, the capital of Srinagar, three-fourths of the

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The Kashmir Area



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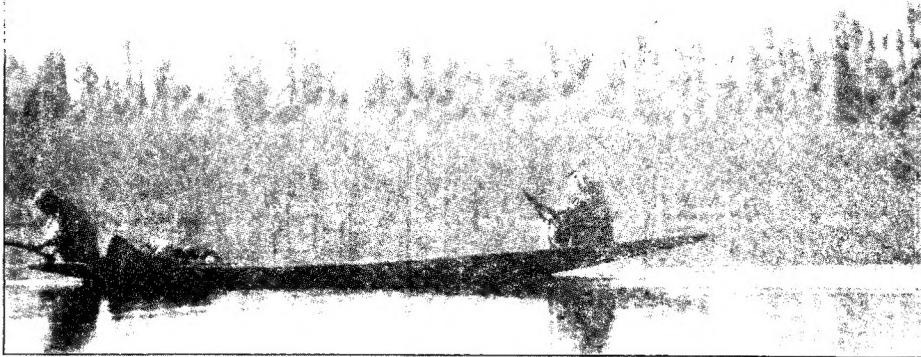
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*Mountainous terrain in
Indian-controlled Kashmir*



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population, and most of the cultivable land. This line was modified slightly in subsequent Indo-Pakistani wars [redacted]

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India Consolidates Its Position

Over the years India strengthened its military presence and tightened its political grip on its portion of Kashmir, which includes the predominantly Buddhist region of Ladakh and the Hindu-dominated Jammu region. New Delhi backed away from a plebiscite and rejected various other schemes: cession of Kashmir to Pakistan, independence for Kashmir, maintenance of the status quo, full autonomy guaranteed by India and Pakistan, and dilution of the Muslim majority by resettling Hindus in the state. [redacted]

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In the end, Kashmir became a special member of the Indian Union, with more autonomy than the other 21 states. New Delhi made this unusual concession in hopes of offsetting the Kashmiris' emotional resistance to incorporation in the overwhelmingly Hindu republic. [redacted]

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In most respects, the 5 million Kashmiris are content with the present arrangements. The plebiscite demand that is so vital to the Pakistani Government evokes little enthusiasm among the bulk of Kashmiris on either side of the cease-fire line. [redacted]

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Sheikh Abdullah



[redacted] © [redacted]

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**Sheikh Abdullah
"The Lion of Kashmir"**

Establishment and preservation of Kashmir's special status and privileges in the Indian constitution have been the consuming passion of Kashmir's leading political figure, Sheikh Abdullah. He became the state's Chief Minister in 1975 after spending most of the period following Indian independence in detention. Abdullah initially favored a plebiscite, but finally reached an accommodation with Prime Minister Gandhi in 1975 that made him the Chief Minister in return for his acceptance of Kashmir's accession to India as complete, final, and irrevocable. [redacted]

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Old and New Problems

Abdullah's return did not solve India's Kashmir problem. In addition to continued Pakistani pressure for a settlement, India is troubled by a wave of Islamic fundamentalism and the possibility of a power struggle when the 76-year-old Abdullah departs the political scene. [redacted]

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Although India has proclaimed itself a secular nation, Islamic fundamentalists in India and Pakistan have never acquiesced in Kashmir's inclusion in the predominantly Hindu environment of India. A brief outburst of Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir in 1980 was suppressed by government forces but could reappear at any time. [redacted]

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**Fundamentalism
in Kashmir**

The Kashmiri hardliners belong to a pro-Pakistani culture and religious organization, the Jamaat-i-Islami; its student affiliate, the Tulba-i-Islami; and other minor organizations. The Jamaat has small units all over India and subscribes to the concept of Muslim solidarity and minimal contact with Hindus. In Kashmir, the Jamaat has been little more than a paper organization. Its platform—which demands a plebiscite, claims that the Indian constitution cannot apply to Muslims, and denounces the strong Indian Army presence in Kashmir—has forced it to maintain a low public profile. It draws its following mainly from middle class professionals. Kashmiri peasants are alienated by the Jamaat's prohibition on the local tradition of worship at the shrines of Muslim saints. Until recently, New Delhi generally ignored the Jamaat.

Even Abdullah may have been caught off guard when the Jamaat convened a large international conference in Srinigar last June. The stated purpose was to celebrate the 15th century of the Islamic calendar. The 10,000 attendees included an impressive representation of religious figures from the Middle East. Resolutions were passed which supported the Iranian revolution, opposed the Soviet move into Afghanistan, and criticized the "pro-India" attitude of Abdullah.

Jamaat's student wing also swung into action. Since the Tulba's inception in 1978, its leaders had not made much headway in organizing Muslim Kashmiri youth for an Islamic "awakening." Suddenly, it drew attention and alarm in New Delhi with its announced plans to hold an international student conference in August.

New Delhi and Abdullah both believed the fundamentalists had to be squelched. Abdullah reportedly delayed clamping down, wanting New Delhi to recognize the need for his cooperation in neutralizing the new threat. On the other hand, Abdullah's relations with Gandhi were already strained, and he did not want disorders in the state to provide her a pretext for dissolving his government. Following consultations with Gandhi, Abdullah canceled the impending conference and jailed key extremists. Those remaining at large are under close scrutiny by Indian security forces.

Uneasy Relations

In the year ahead the Gandhi-Abdullah relationship will continue to be uneasy. The Congress Party probably is encouraging anti-Abdullah sentiment in Ladakh. The Ladakhis claim Abdullah's government is not responsive enough to the developmental needs of the rugged frontier region. Abdullah has reaffirmed his loyalty to Gandhi and insists that only he can maintain political stability in Kashmir. He draws limits, however, on excessive meddling by New Delhi or efforts by the Congress Party to discredit him. Gandhi sees little alternative to keeping Abdullah in power as long as possible, but makes no secret of her dislike and distrust of him.

Secret**Congress Party
Maneuvering**

The Kashmir unit of the Congress Party is bound to cause more trouble as state elections in 1982 draw closer. Congress withdrew its support from Abdullah after Gandhi's national electoral defeat in 1977. In subsequent state elections Abdullah handily won reelection and maintained generally good relations with the Morarji Desai government in New Delhi.

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When Gandhi was reelected in 1980, the Kashmiri Congress Party sought revenge against Abdullah. Congress was also irritated that Abdullah was making political deals with rivals of Congress in the Jammu section of Kashmir. While Abdullah is preeminent in the Kashmir Valley, he has far less influence in the predominantly Hindu Jammu region to the south. Congress therefore sought to discredit Abdullah locally and in New Delhi, accusing him of corruption, nepotism, and disloyalty to India. They urged Gandhi to take a tougher line with Abdullah.

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At this point, ousting or weakening Abdullah would only further damage the Congress Party's poor image among the Kashmiris. Moreover, no opposition leader can approach Abdullah's popularity.

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Gandhi probably has told Congress not to engage in counterproductive maneuvering for the near term and to use more conventional means to broaden its electoral base in advance of the next state poll. This is a discouraging mandate. Congress is the major opposition party in the state legislature, but it has only eight seats. Since the National Conference holds 47, it should easily maintain its dominance.

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Congress leaders are sorely tempted to exploit tension within Abdullah's party over the succession question. Abdullah appears to be in reasonably good health, but his age, combined with a reported history of heart trouble, suggests he could quickly be removed from active politics.

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The only serious contenders to replace Abdullah come from his immediate family. Abdullah has generated a fair amount of tension by refusing to designate a successor. Current odds favor his 45-year-old son Farooq, a member of the national parliament and a medical doctor. But Abdullah's son-in-law, G. M. Shah, who controls the organizational apparatus of the party as well as its coffers, is not likely to stand aside. Farooq probably is more acceptable to Gandhi, and New Delhi would intervene in the final choice if necessary.

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**Islam Elsewhere
in India**

Widespread disorders or discontent among Muslims elsewhere in India could spur an Islamic reaction in Kashmir; conversely, unrest in Kashmir might arouse Muslims elsewhere in the country. Thus far Islamic revivalism has not taken hold outside of Kashmir. Nonetheless, India, with 70 million

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Muslims—one of the largest Muslim populations in the world—is nervous about signs of restlessness among Muslims anywhere in the country. [redacted]

Muslims constitute 11 percent of India's population and are trapped near the bottom of the social and economic pyramid. The highly discriminatory Hindu caste system excludes Muslims and noncaste Hindus from almost any opportunity for advancement. In the last several years, unrest has grown among scattered groups of the downtrodden. A recent upswing in bloody sectarian incidents indicates new boldness by both Hindus and Muslims. Muslims are especially easy targets for persecution by Hindu overlords who can usually extract police cooperation. [redacted]

Publicity about Islamic militancy in the Middle East may be encouraging new activism among some Indian Muslims, but very few peasants are aware of the trend. It appears, instead, that India's most heavily oppressed communities, Hindu and Muslim alike, are slowly reacting against social prohibitions that have long condemned them to servitude and poverty. [redacted]

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New Delhi publicly blames "foreign influences" for fanning communal strife, but it lacks evidence. There is no solid indication that Pakistan or any other Muslim nation has serious plans to revolutionize coreligionists in India. Most Indians see the allegation as an effort to find a scapegoat for the government's inability to curb the trend toward violence. Outside funding probably will not become a significant factor in promoting Muslim unrest in India, except possibly in Kashmir. [redacted]

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New Delhi is highly irritated at the publicity Pakistan has given to the communal incidents in India and the suppression of Kashmiri fundamentalists. This is seen as a ploy to distract the Pakistani public from its own domestic problems. Should violence involving Indian Muslims continue and expand, New Delhi fears Pakistan will try to mobilize condemnation of India in the Muslim world. President Zia's policy of Islamization in Pakistan and his close ties with the Islamic world are in themselves disturbing to India. New Delhi also fears that any further tension in Kashmir will invite Pakistani interference. [redacted]

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Pakistan, in turn, sees itself a victim of India's domestic frustrations and ambitions to dominate the subcontinent. Pakistan's deepened sense of isolation and strategic vulnerability since the Soviet takeover in Afghanistan makes it even more suspicious of India and India's closest ally, the USSR. With close Indo-Soviet ties reaffirmed when President Brezhnev visited India in December, the Pakistanis see no alternative but to expand their military capabilities in an effort to meet perceived threats on both their Indian and Afghan frontiers. [redacted]

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Meanwhile, Islamabad will continue to expend considerable sums on Azad Kashmir. The Government of Pakistan controls this remote area although it is administered by an ostensibly independent government. Islamabad supplies the top civil servants, subsidizes the budget, and meets periodic food shortages. The Azad Kashmiris hope for eventual reunification with Kashmiris across the cease-fire line, but both groups are relatively content with the status quo. [redacted]

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Pakistan

To Pakistan, the quest for Kashmir has been one of the most frustrating and humiliating aspects of its stormy relationship with India since independence. Neither diplomatic pressure nor war has brought Pakistan closer to its goal, and yet it remains unwilling to accept the fact that a more advantageous Kashmir settlement probably is unattainable. [redacted]

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In the Indo-Pakistani Simla agreement of 1972, Pakistan saw a ray of hope for a negotiated settlement. Following the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war over Bangladesh, Prime Minister Gandhi and President Bhutto agreed to renounce force as a means of resolving the Kashmir dispute and other problems. Pakistan was particularly encouraged by India's apparent willingness to hold future talks on Kashmir. For its part, India believed it finally had Pakistan's agreement to treat the dispute as strictly bilateral, excluding further involvement of third parties, especially the United Nations. [redacted]

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The "Simla spirit" has all but evaporated. Each side blames the other for violating the intent and terms of the agreement. India has not signaled any serious interest in talking about Kashmir. President Zia, in his address to the UN General Assembly in October, repeated Pakistan's standard rhetoric on Kashmir and reminded the UN of its responsibility regarding a plebiscite. Islamabad argues that a UN role is sustained by the presence of UN military observers along the Kashmir cease-fire line and resists Indian efforts to have this function terminated. [redacted]

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Prospects

Kashmir will remain the Achilles heel of Indo-Pakistani relations for the foreseeable future. It is so deeply ingrained as an emotional issue in both countries that it probably will not fade with the passage of time. The intensity of feeling attached to the dispute also makes it a grave source of tension. [redacted]

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The Indians are unlikely to adopt a more flexible position. A plebiscite is clearly out of the question. India would probably go to war to repel major Pakistani violations of the cease-fire line. [redacted]

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*Prime Minister Gandhi and
President Zia meet in 1980*



[redacted] ©

Pakistan will almost certainly continue to keep the issue alive internationally by urging the UN to press India for a negotiated settlement. Capitulation to India would discredit any Pakistani government and possibly even trigger its downfall.

In the near term, the greatest danger appears to lie in possible overreaction by Pakistan or India to military moves by the other along the cease-fire line. Minor violations are routine, but because of the Afghanistan crisis, Pakistan is unusually nervous about Indian troop movements.

Tension between the two countries could also mount swiftly if widespread Muslim agitation developed in Kashmir. The Pakistani Government would feel compelled to give the agitators moral support and might over time give them other help if they seemed able to sustain their opposition to India. India would react strongly to Pakistani interference and would consider military retaliation if the Kashmiri agitation threatened to get out of hand.

Many factors weigh against Pakistan's initiating a war, however—especially India's vast military superiority. India could not only inflict a mortal wound on Pakistan's defenses, but also occupy the Pakistani portion of Kashmir.

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Page 4: *India Today*, 1-15 December 1977

Page 9: United Press International

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